DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 114 738 88 CG 010 198

TITLE Family Communications' Parent Handbook. Mehlville School District, ESEA Title III, PACE Program.
INSTITUTION Mehlville R-9 School District, St. Louis, Mo.
SPONS AGENCY Bureau of School Systems (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.e
NOTE 21p.; For related documents, see CG 010 197-202

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Skills; *Family Counseling; *Family Relationship; Instructional Materials; Manuals; Parent Child Relationship; Parent Education; *Parent Workshops; *Problem Solving
IDENTIFIERS Elementary Secondary Education Act Title III; ESEA Title III; PACE; *Projects to Advance Creativity in Education

ABSTRACT

This parent handbook is a compilation of the exercises used by Mehlville School District (St. Louis, Mo.) in their workshop for parents regarding family communications. Worksheets in the handbook include a preworkshop questionnaire, a definition of terms, and a comparison of methods of conflict resolution. (Author/HMV)

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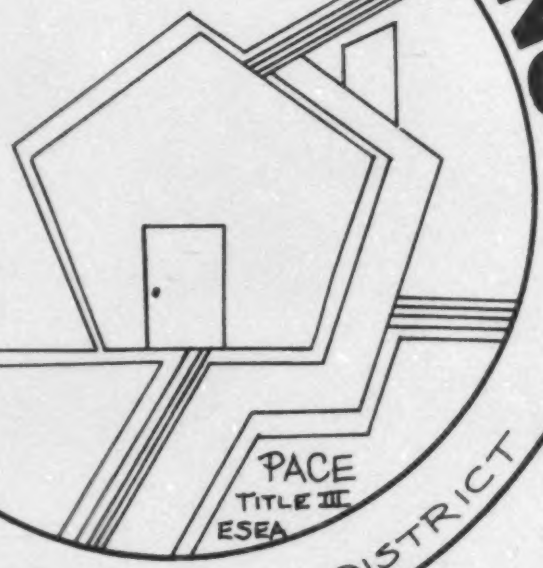
FAMILY COMMUNICATIONS

PARENT HANDBOOK



PACE
TITLE III
ESEA

MEHLVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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PRE-WORKSHOP QUESTIONNAIRE

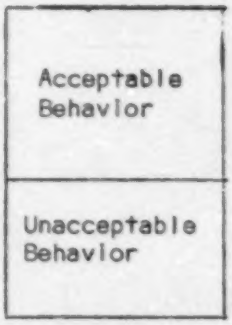
1. What areas are of most concern to you in relation to your children?

2. How have you handled communication about those problems in the past?

3. If you have been dissatisfied with communication on these problems, mention what changes you feel need to be made.

from: Brownstone, Jane E. and Dye, Carol J. Communication Workshop for Parents of Adolescents. Champaign, Ill.: Research Press, 1973.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Behavior



The rectangle is representative of the boundaries of all of the behavior of another individual. Of that behavior some is acceptable to us and some is not. When our child leaves clothes all over his room we generally find that unacceptable. However when she (he) helps us set the table for dinner we find that acceptable.

List five behaviors of one of your children or your spouse that are acceptable.

This is the behavior of _____.

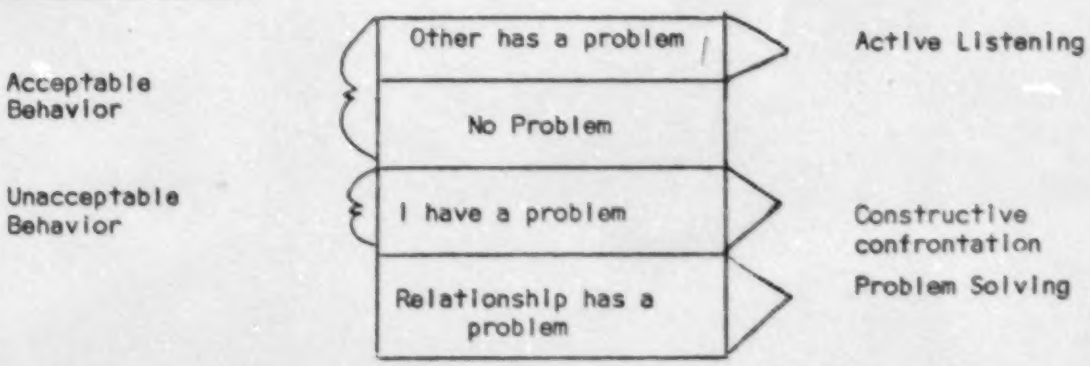
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

List five behaviors of one of your children or of your spouse that are unacceptable.

This is the behavior of _____.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Who Has a Problem

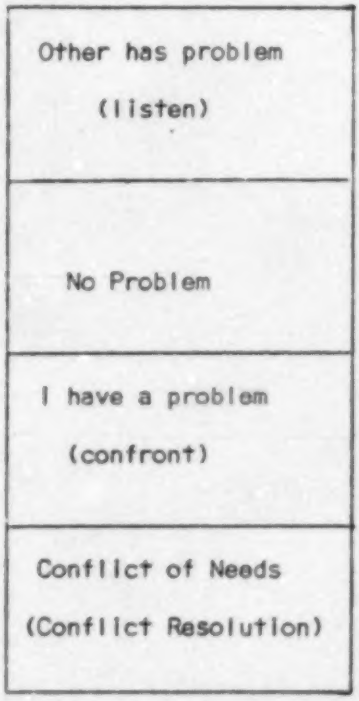


The rectangle also gives us clues about the appropriate communication skill to use depending on who has the problem. When someone else has a problem which is not directly affecting us, listening is the appropriate skill to use. When we feel anxious and up tight about someone elses behavior we attempt to influence their behavior, but with low risk of damaging the relationship. To do this we use constructive confrontation. When we have conflicting needs conflict resolution skills become appropriate. In addition values issues arise and for these problems we must rely on an openness in the relationship so that mutual influencing becomes possible.

Practice Exercise

Determine where in the rectangle the following situations belong. Draw lines from the problem to the appropriate section of the rectangle.

1. Your daughter comes home from school and says "I am fed up with those girls."
2. You are reading a novel while your child does his (her) homework.
3. You dislike that your child wears blue jeans to school.
4. You have a meeting in your living room and your child needs to watch a t.v. program for school.
5. You are trying to write a report and your husband interrupts to talk about the stock market.
6. You come home to find the kitchen a disarray.
7. You don't like your son's new girlfriend.
8. Your husband comes home disappointed about his new secretary.
9. You are ready to leave for the theatre and find your car is blocked in the driveway.
10. You play a game with your two children.



Scripts

Everyone has a psychological script and lives in a culture that has scripts. The psychological script is a program for the individual's life drama. It begins in childhood with the messages -- both verbal and non-verbal that the child receives from his parents. These messages can be constructive, destructive, or non-productive. The compulsion to live out the preprogrammed life drama is hard to understand; however people can often observe in others a compulsion to perform a certain way or to live up to a specific expectation. Think of the person struggling to get to the top at any cost, or the person who really seems to enjoy living, or someone for whom things always seem to go badly. These individuals base their life on the messages they received early in their lives.

Programming also occurs based on cultural scripts. These are the accepted and expected patterns that occur within society. They are decided by the assumptions believed by a majority of the people within that group.

Most people at one time or another play roles. If they become aware of their roles, they have freedom to continue in them or to reject them. The aware person can decide how to live his own life, rewriting his own unique qualities. The aware person is able to choose in favor of his/her real potential.

LIST OF FEELING WORDS

Abandoned
Adequate
Affectionate
Agony
Almighty
Ambivalent
Angry
Annoyed
Anxious
Apathetic
Astounded
Awed

Bad
Beautiful
Betrayed
Bitter
Blissful
Bold
Bored
Brave
Burdened

Calm
Capable
Captivated
Challenged
Charmed
Cheated
Cheerful
Childish
Clever
Combative
Competitive
Condemned
Confused
Conspicuous
Contented
Cruel
Crushed

Deceitful
Defeated
Delighted
Desirous
Despair
Destructive
Determined
Different
Diminished
Discontented
Distracted
Distraught
Disturbed
Dominated
Divided

Eager
Ecstatic
Electrified
Empty
Enchanted
Energetic
Enjoy
Envious
Excited
Evil
Exasperated
Exhausted

Fascinated
Fearful
Flustered
Foolish
Frantic
Frustrated
Frightened
Free
Full
Fury

Gay
Glad
Good
Gratified
Greedy
Grief
Groovy
Guilty
Gullable

Happy
Hate
Heavenly
Helpless
High
Homesick
Honored
Horrible
Hurt
Hysterical

Ignored
Immortal
Imposed Upon
Impressed
Infatuated
Infuriated
Inspired
Intimidated
Isolated

Jealousy
Joyous
Jumpy

Kind
Keen

Lazy
Lecherous
Left Out
Lonely
Longing
Loving (love)
Low
Lustful

Mad
Mean
Melancholy
Miserable

Naughty
Nervous
Nice
Nutty

Obnoxious
Obsessed
Odd
Opposed
Outraged
Overwhelmed

Pain
Panicked
Peaceful
Persecuted
Petrified
Pity
Pleasant
Pleased
Pressured
Pretty
Prim
Prissy
Proud

Quarrelsome
Queer

Rage
Refreshed
Rejected
Relaxed
Relieved
Remorse
Restless
Reverent
Rewarded
Righteous

Sad
Satisfied
Scared
Screwed Up
Settled
Sexy
Shocked
Silly
Skeptical
Sneaky
Solemn
Sorrowful
Spiteful
Startled
Stingy
Strange
Stuffed
Stupid
Stunned
Stupefied
Suffering
Sure
Sympathetic

Talkative
Tempted
Tense
Tentative
Terrible
Threatened
Tired
Thwarted
Trapped
Troubled

Ugly
Uneasy
Unsettled

Violent
Vital
Vunerable
Vivacious

Wicked
Wonderful
Weepy
Worried

Zanie

Typical Responses

1. Give an order or command	THE SERGEANT
2. Issue a warning or threat	THE THREATENER
3. Preach or moralize	THE PREACHER
4. Give advice or provide a solution	THE PROBLEM SOLVER
5. Use logical persuasion	THE LAWYER
6. Agree or praise	THE COMPLIMENTER
7. Disagree or criticize	THE CRITICAL PARENT
8. Analyze or diagnose	THE PSYCHIATRIST
9. Offer sympathy or reassurance	THE COMFORTER
10. Ask probing questions	THE PROBER
11. Use humor or sarcasm	THE COMEDIAN
12. Name-calling, labeling	THE LABELER

Active Listening

Conditions

Active listening works best when the following conditions exist:

The other person is expressing feelings about a problem or concern.
You have enough time to listen to what he has to say.
If there is no time then, set aside a time later to listen.
Have a setting which is comfortable and free from interruption.
Be able to respond to the following statements with "yes".

I genuinely care about person.
This person is capable of finding his own solutions to this problem.
I have faith and respect for this person to accept the solutions he may come up with.
I can keep from giving my ideas, opinions and feelings about how this person should handle the situation. (separateness)

No-Nos

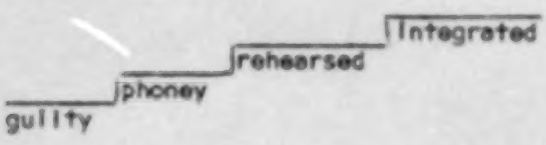
Active listennig should NOT be used:

When you own problem.
When you want to change values.
When information is called for without verbal empathy.
When you focus feedback on the object of the problem instead of on the feeling.
When you use the same phrase.
When the sender is mad at you.
When you want to find out stuff. (I listened to my kid for over an hour and never did find out what they did they did that night)

Common Errors - Active Listening is more effective when the following are avoided:

1. Overshooting-exaggerating the feeling
2. Undershooting-minimizing the feeling
3. Adding-pushing listener's perception
4. Omitting-ignoring material
5. Lagging-going back to old material
6. Rushing-beating him to the punch
7. Parroting-responding to the code
8. Analyzing-going beyond what the sender wants listener to know

Learning Phases of Active Listening:



from: P.E.T., by Dr. T. Gordon

Active Listening Benefits

It shows Sender that you are interested in him as a person.

It proves to the Sender that not only have you heard him, you have understood.

It is your check on the accuracy of your decoding.

It gives the Sender a chance to ventilate, to have a catharsis, to feel relieved, to release the grip of the feeling on the Sender. Feelings are transitory.

It communicates acceptance of Sender.

It fosters the other doing his own problem-definition and problem-solving. It keepsthe responsibility with him, yet you remain involved. He holds onto the ball.

It fosters the Sender moving from a superfical to a deeper, more basic problem.

It fosters the Sender dealing with feelings, not with just facts. (Most messages contain both fact and feeling)

I can have two different feelings about the same fact. Significant thing is the feeling not the fact. The 12 Roadblocks tend to be responses to the fact. (Tell her not to leave; Oh, she'll not do it; Don't worry; What have you done to cause this; She's only threatening you.) Active Listening is a response to the feeling.

It frequently fosters insights--new ways of seeing things, new attitudes, new behaviors, new understandings of self.

It fosters the other person being more open and honest with you-- more willing to use you as a helping agent.

It helps Sender grow toward being his own problem-solver, toward being less dependent on other for solutions, toward being more self-responsible, more self-directing--master of his own destiny.

It promotes a more intimate and warm relationship. Sender feels warm and loving toward Listener; Listener better understands Sender and feels more warm and loving toward him.

The Listener hears new data.

from: P.E.T., by Dr. T. Gordon

COMPONENTS OF DESI MESSAGES

Describe - Describe the specific behavior involved. Your negative feelings are tied to a particular behavior of the child. Describe this behavior as exactly as you can so your child knows that he isn't being condemned as a whole person, but that a part of his behavior is unacceptable. Example, if your ten year old is throwing dirt at the next door neighbor's kid you would begin your message with, "When you throw dirt at Bobby", as opposed to "What's the matter with you, don't you know how to behave." This may sound unreasonable to you at first, but stick with us. It works.

Express - Communicate to your child how this behavior has made you feel. Are you feeling hopeless, mad, frustrated, nervous, depressed or irritated as a result of his behavior. Give a definite label to your feelings so that your child receives a clear message and you can get out of your system rather than letting them smolder inside.

Suggest/Involve - Don't leave your child in the dark. Now that you've told him what he can't do let him know what he can do. Your child isn't a mind reader and even though you make very clear what behavior you don't like he may make a bad guess as to what is acceptable. For example, if you've told him how displeased you are when he throws dirt at the neighbor's kid and leave it at that he may well switch to punching the neighbor's kid in the nose. Suggest a positive behavior to replace the negative one. If you're "together" enough at the time an even better way to complete a DESI message is to involve your child in naming an alternative behavior. Ask him for suggestions and work out a solution acceptable to all concerned. Remember the alternative behavior you're looking for isn't a punishment that will be applied if this negative behavior persists, it's a way the child can replace the unacceptable behavior with acceptable behavior.

DESI Messages

Example:	'You' Message:	DESI Message:
1. Your child is banging on a tin-pan while you are on the phone.		
2. Your child comes in with muddy shoes, walking across the clean floor.		
3. Your 12 year old arrives 15 minutes late for dinner for the third time that week.		
4. You find your child dawdling around the family room when he/she promised to clean it up.		
5. Your 9 year old tells you an obvious lie.		
6. Your 14 year old has gotten into your things (make-up, tools) and left them sitting all over the room. You enter as he/she is leaving the room.		
Other situations:		

COMPONENTS OF DEE MESSAGES

Describe - Describe specifically the behavior of your child that you're feeling good about. For example, "You cleaned your room," "Here on time for dinner," or "You've helped mom with the dishes" are some specific behaviors you might feel good about.

Express - Communicate to your child exactly how you feel about the particular way he was behaving. "I feel great," "I'm really proud," or "I'm really suprised and happy." are three good feelings you might have about one of the behaviors above.

Encourage - You want this behavior to either continue at its present rate or occur more often. You can help make this a reality by encouraging your child to continue the behavior. "Keep it up," "Great going," or "That's really neat, I hope you can do it again soon" are common ways of encouraging the continuation of "good" behavior. There are times when this last step will seem inappropriate. Feel free to use your own judgement as to whether you'll use it or not.

PEACE-MAKER: Acts as if he (she) agrees. Tries to please, reassure, sympathasize, and console. Wants peace at any price.

Example: 1. You've had a really hard day.

2. It's O.K., dear.

3. You can have something different for dinner if you want. I can get you a sandwich.

BLAMER: Disagrees on principle no matter what is said. He (she) gives orders and finds fault.

Example: 1. We've had this for dinner three times this week.

2. Why can't you do it right?

3. You go upstairs young man (woman) and do your homework.

COMPUTER: Talks as if he (she) has no feelings. Words sound super-reasonable and lack affect.

Example: 1. I am troubled by the inability of this family to get along.

2. I am happy to see that you were able to achieve your goal.

DISTRACTER: Comes out with irrelevant words and affect. Moves continually.

Example: 1. Spilling milk.

2. Fidgeting in chair.

3. Makes a response which is irrelevant to previous statement.

Conflict Solving Through Democratic Transaction

Rudolph Dreikurs, M.D.

Wherever people live, conflicts are inevitable because of differences of opinions, interests, and goals. In the past, conflicts were resolved by the person or group in power; the subordinate had to accept the terms of solution. In a democratic setting, this procedure no longer works. Nobody is willing to accept imposition and defeat; every victory is short-lived.

The techniques by which conflicts can be resolved in a democratic setting are well established, but little known. We found four essential procedures necessary for solving conflicts:

1. Conflicts can be resolved only on the basis of mutual respect. This precludes the possibility of solving a conflict through either fighting or giving in. Fighting violates respect for the other, and yielding, -- respect for oneself. At the present time few people know what else to do.

2. One must identify the nature of the conflict, -- pinpoint the real issue. It is hardly ever the issue about which disagreement exists; it is usually personal involvement, -- concern with winning or losing, with vanity, ambition or other personal goals.

3. One must reach agreement. Few people consider this possible in a conflict situation. Actually, whatever happens in a relationship, is based on agreement, communication and full participation. If one changes one's own role, a new agreement is inevitable. One usually thinks only what the opponent should do -- and then is helpless, because we cannot achieve that, -- instead of thinking what one could do oneself. This alone opens the door to new agreement.

4. One cannot resolve conflicts without shared responsibility, without full participation in decision making of all participants in a conflict. Democracy does not mean that everybody can do as he pleases. It requires leadership to integrate and to win mutual consent. Leaders can be trained for this function, in our homes, in our schools and in the community.

Statement of the problem. A complete definition of the problem must take into account your behavior and that of the other person and the situation in which the behavior occurs.

Active listening is essential to show that there is understanding of each others position.

Sending DESI messages that reflect our real feelings as well as our needs and wants are also essential.

Defining what our goals are in the situation becomes part of the definition of the problem.

Alternative Selection

Brainstorming alternatives requires that all alternatives that can be imagined are identified without evaluating the alternatives.

Look at the consequences of each alternative reviewing: the best outcome for each alternative the worst outcome for each alternative what is likely to happen if the alternative is used.

Decide on a mutually acceptable solution.

Negotiate a Contract

Decide who does what and when.

Rehearse verbally or on paper the decisions that have been made.

This lets everyone know what the expectations are.

Evaluating the Solution

Re evaluate to see if the solution decided upon actually met the needs of the situation. If not, it is necessary to repeat the steps.

A Comparison of Methods of Conflict Resolution and the Consequences of Each

	Authoritarian Approach	Permissive Approach	SANE Approach
Characteristics of the behavior:	Parents express their rights, needs and desires	Children express their rights, needs and desires	Both parents and children express
	Parents provide solutions that meet their needs	Children provide solutions that meet their needs	Both parents and children think of solutions so that all needs are met
	Parent is in a position of power	Children are in a position of power	Both feel respected
	Parent wins; Child loses	Children win; parents lose	Both win
	Parents are committed to the success of the solution	Children are committed to the success of the solution	Both are committed to the success of the solution
Parents' feelings when they use these methods:	Angry, then righteous, superior, deprecatory at the time, possible guilty later	Hurt, anxious, frustrated, disappointed in self at the time and possibly angry later	Confident, self respecting, feel good about self at the time and later
The children's feelings about themselves when parents engage in those methods:	Hurt, humiliated	Guilty, superior or angry	Valued, respected
Children's feelings about you when you engage in these methods:	Angry, vengeful	Irritated, pity, disgusted	Generally respectful

	Authoritarian Approach	Permissive Approach	SANE Approach
Outcome for parents:	Parents achieve goals, but at the expense of the childrens' self esteem and the expense of the relationship.	Parents do not achieve goals; they feel frustrated and angry	Both parents and children achieve goals - self esteem is high.
Outcome for children:	Children do not achieve goals. Children save up anger, resentment, and will try to get even. May lie, blame others, become a bully, or submit and become obedient and compliant, also withdrawal is possible.	Children achieve goals but at the expense of parents. Children become more selfish, inconsiderate, uncontrolled. Often have difficulty with pears.	Both parents and children feel good, values by self and by children. Both feel good about selves. Self-confidence is improved; needs are met, relationships are freer - more honest.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION WORKSHEET

1. Describe situation.

2. How do you usually respond in this kind of situation?

3. What makes it hard for you to respond in a facilatative manner? What are you feeling?

4. How do you think the other person is feeling?

5. Whose problem is it? Where does it fit in the rectangle?

6. What is your goal? What do you, ideally, want out of the interaction?

7. What kind of messages could you send that would strengthen your relationship?

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